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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1915  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4541  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2351  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2216  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2789  
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3100

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 001534

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, SCA/PPD, ECA, IIP, DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [KPAO](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: DESPITE DISAPPROVAL BY SOME  
AUTHORITIES, AMERICAN CORNER OFFERS OPPORTUNITY AND A  
WINDOW TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD FOR MARY STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Richard Miles for reasons 1.4 (B)  
and (D).

11. (C) Econoff visited the American Corner in the provincial capital of Mary on November 13 to find out the status of U.S. exchange programs. Mary American Corner Regional Representative Albina Burashnikova said that local education authorities still discouraged teachers from coming to the American Corner, and said that hardly any teachers were applying for the IREX-administered Teaching Excellence and Achievement (TEA) program. Later on that evening, the daughter in a family where econoff spent the night said that teachers in her school had told students that if they went to the U.S. on the Future Leadership Exchange Program (FLEX), they would not be welcomed back at school. The parents of this girl said that it was wrong for officials to discourage students from going on the FLEX program, and it is also wrong to discourage them from visiting the American Corner. Their daughter also mentioned at one time that she was hesitant to go because she is a girl and not very brave.

12. (SBU) Econoff also spoke to students about the U.S. presidential elections. About 30 young people, including some who do not speak any English at all, packed the American Corner for the biography film about Barack Obama. Following the film presentation, all of the few students who asked questions -- with some prodding from Mary American Corner Regional Representative Albina Burashnikova -- were boys. Econoff asked girls if they had questions, but they demurred.

13. (SBU) COMMENT: American Corners serve a vital purpose in Turkmenistan's provinces: to bring the message of democracy and the ability of an individual to make a difference. It is also important for female American diplomats to travel to these far reaches as examples of what women can do and be.  
END COMMENT.  
MILES